

Academics anxious for learning research funds

Plans to set up a research fund purely to finance individual study in "esoteric" areas are being discussed by the Government — and academics are eagerly awaiting the results.

The director (designate) of the City Polytechnic, Dr David Johns, said yesterday: "I can only say, 'we're ready.'"

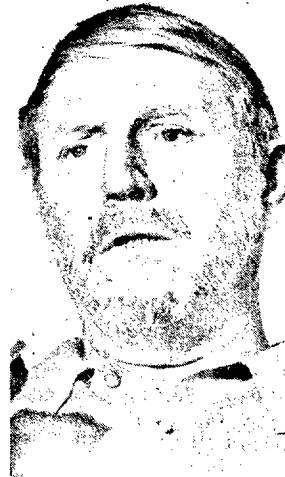
He spoke of the benefits that could accrue from the encouragement of research in Hongkong's learning institutions, noting that there were no separate funds specifically for this purpose.

"In the UK and other developed countries there is specific research funding for the more esoteric areas of interest," he said.

A report compiled by Lord Flowers on the feasibility of such a fund, Hongkong's research needs and how they could best be financed, has been completed and is being considered by the Government.



Dr Johns



Dr Legg

The director of the Hongkong Polytechnic, Dr Keith Legg, confirmed last night that the report had been finished, but refused to comment further on its contents.

But Dr Johns, referring to the mainstream work of the City Polytechnic, said that the aim was to provide vocational courses which would mostly complement rather

than supplement work already conducted by the Hongkong Polytechnic.

The City Polytechnic now boasts 12 permanent associate directors on its staff, nine of whom have been recruited locally.

But Dr Johns, speaking at a lunch meeting of the University Graduates Association, denied that there had

been any deliberate localisation policy.

"We went for the best, and we got the best," he said.

Advertising for staff was continuing worldwide, and the initial low response in the summer before building plans were finalised had been replaced by a rush for the jobs offered.

In the business studies department alone, 230 applicants were vying for 13 posts.

"We choose on quality. Overseas headships, even though we had very good applications from the UK, didn't impress us as much as did applicants from the local setting," Dr Johns added.

The new associate directors on the staff include Dr Isidore Cannon (academic planning), Mr John Dockerill (resources planning) and Mr Keith Houghton (administration), who is also secretary to the council.

Dr Namakkal Balasubramanian will head the computing studies department, Mr Edward Chow Kam-wah accountancy and Dr Jose de Barros the social work department.

All three have been recruited from the Hongkong Polytechnic, as have Mr Kam Wai-kee, heading mathematical studies, Mr Thomas Wu Wai-on (general secretary), Mr Philip Rappaport (librarian), and Mr Peter Smith (estates officer).

The finance officer will be Mr James Ng Kam-ming.

Dr Johns admitted that there was a danger in taking too many staff from the Hongkong Polytechnic, but that he hoped the current overseas recruitment would make this unnecessary in future.

Applications have been received from India, West and East Africa and Papua New Guinea, as well as from the United States, Canada, Australia and Britain.

Overseas student applications have just started, with the first coming from Ghana. But unfortunately, he wanted to do electrical engineering, which will not be available until 1988.

The City Polytechnic's prospectus is now being prepared and should be published by February.

Dr Johns said that the temporary facilities for the City Polytechnic — pending the completion of its permanent site by 1988 — were due to be confirmed soon.

As for the question of when the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee would upgrade the City Polytechnic's diplomas and certificates into the degree status which they deserved, Dr Johns said: "My own view is that it would be better sooner than later."

Polytechnic raises its tuition fees

The Hongkong Polytechnic will increase tuition fees by more than 15 per cent for both degree and non-degree courses next year.

This was disclosed yesterday by the head of the polytechnic's Students' Affairs Unit, Mrs Rita Fan, at a lunch meeting of the Lions Club of Hongkong Harbour.

Mrs Fan said fees for non-degree courses will rise from the present \$2,200 to about \$2,600.

For degree courses, fees will rise by 16 per cent, from \$3,100 to about \$3,600, she said.

The polytechnic revises its tuition fees every year. Last year, the fee for non-degree courses was \$1,900.

Mrs Fan said that with the increase in fees, Government grants and loans for students would also go up.

According to a spokesman for the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee, \$7.87 million has been granted so far to polytechnic students for 1983/84.

And so far loans of \$24.77 million have been made to students for this year.

The UPGC has given a total of \$65.6 million in loans and \$22.3 million in grants so far this year to students of the two universities, the polytechnic and the Hongkong Baptist College.

The spokesman said that under the students' finance scheme, grants and loans should go up in accordance with increases in tuition fees.

Several polytechnic students interviewed said the higher fees would have little effect on them as grants and loans would also be raised.

In her speech, Mrs Fan said that up to October 27, 66 per cent of 2,749 graduate full-time students this year had been able to find work, and 22 per cent had continued their studies.

She said about 10 per cent had not secured a job, either because they had to sit external examinations or they were waiting for better job prospects.

The current year marked the introduction of degree courses in the polytechnic for the first time, and 280 students were admitted into five courses.

Mrs Fan said further degree courses at an advanced stage of planning include design, electrical engineering and civil engineering, to begin next year; and textile and clothing marketing, manufacturing engineering and building services engineering for a probable start in 1985.